

A Short

W Penn ABSTRACT Of the TREATISE of OATHS:

Containing several Weighty Reasons why the
People called QUAKERS, refuse to
SWEAR:

And those Confirmed by Numerous Testimonies out of
Gentiles, Jews, and CHRISTIANS, both Fathers,
Doctors, and Martyrs.

Presented to the KING, and Great Council of Eng-
land, Assembled in PARLIAMENT: In the
Year 1675.

K Friends, Secy.

Mat. 5. 34. But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

Jam. 5. 22. Above all things, my Brethren, Swear not.

Jer. 32. 10. Because of Oaths the Land Mourneib.

Theognis, He ought to Swear neither this thing, nor any thing.

Maimonides, It is a great Good for a Man not to Swear at all.

Chrysostom, It is not lawful to Swear, neither in a just nor unjust
Cause.

Apr. 1712

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ABSTRACT

OF THE TREATISES OF

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Printed by the King, and Great Council of England, in the Year 1773.

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To the KING, and Great Council of *England*, Assembled in PARLIAMENT. The Case of the People call'd *Quakers*, relating to *Oaths*, further Represented; and Recommended to their Consideration, in order to a Speedy and Effectual Redress.

THE Common Benefit of the Free People of *England*, being undoubtedly both the first and greatest Reason for the Ancient, Just and Necessary Constitution of Parliaments; and being also inform'd that it is your Resolution, to employ this Session to the Redress of Publick Grievances: And since We cannot but repute our selves a Member of this Great Body you represent, by Birth and English Descent; and are not only involved in the Common Calamities of the Kingdom, but in Particular very cruelly Treated in our Persons and Estates, because we cannot for pure Conscience take any Oath at all (though we have again and again tender'd our solemn Yea or Nay; and are most willing to sustain the same Penalty in Case of Lying, that is usually inflicted for Perjury.) To the End we may not be interpreted to decline the Custom out of meer Humour or Evasion (though our frequent and heavy Sufferings by Fines and tedious Imprisonments, sometimes to Death it self, should sufficiently Vindicate us against any such Incharitable Censure.) WE do, with all due Respect, present you with our Reasons for that Tenderness, and many Testimonies and Presidents in their Defence; and we entreat you, to express that Care of a Member of your own Civil Body, which Nature and Christianity excite to; We mean, That it would

The PREFACE, &c.

would please you to consider how deeply we have already suffered, in Person and Estate, the Inconveniencies we have daily to encounter, and those Injurious not only to our selves, but others we commerce with, in that both they and we, because of our Tenderness in this Matter, are constantly at the Mercy of such as will Swear any thing to advantage themselves, where they are sure that a Contrary Evidence shall be by Law esteem'd (*however True*) Invalid; under which Difficulty, several of us at this Hour fruitlessly Labour: That being sensible of our Calamity, you may please to endeavour, as for others, so for this Grievance, both a Speedy and Effectual Redress; otherwise, besides ordinary Cases, wherein many of us extraordinarily suffer, we may perhaps prove in this of Oaths the Greatest, if not the Only Sufferers of the Kingdom; a Cruelty, we hope, you do not design against us.

God Almighty, we beseech him with all Sincerity of Heart, incline you to Justice, Mercy and Truth, Amen.

London, the 25th of the
3d Month, 1675.

Subscribed on the behalf of the rest of our Friends, by

Alexander Parker,
George Whitehead,
Stephen Crisp,
William Mead,
Gerrard Roberts,
William Welsh,

Samuel Newton,
Thomas Heatt,
John Osgood,
James Claypool,
Thomas Rudyard,
Richard Richardson,

WILLIAM PENN.

Some

Some Inducements Offer'd to Answer this Request, from a Consideration of the Cause and End of an Oath : And those REASONS and TESTIMONIES given by us against the Use and Imposition of it.

The Ground or Reason of SWEARING.

THIS (we think) all will agree to have been the *Degeneration* of Man from Primitive Integrity, at what time *Yea* and *Nay* were enough; for when Men grew Corrupt, they distrusted each other, and had recourse to extraordinary Ways to awe one another into Truth's speaking, as a Remedy against Falseness; else, what need had there been of an Oath, or any Extraordinary Way of Evidence, when every Syllable was freighted with Truth and Integrity? It had been a meer taking of God's Holy Name in Vain: Truth then flowed naturally, and wanted no such Expedient to Extort its Evidence.

It will remain that we give our REASONS why we cannot take this Liberty, and Swear, as well as other Men have done, and yet do.

I. **T**HE first is drawn from the Cause and Ground of Oaths, viz. *Perfidiousness, Distrust and Falshood*: God's Injunctions to avoid those hateful Crimes: The Ability he hath given Man to answer his Commands; and Man's Duty to make that use of God's Gift: For if Swearing came in by Perfidiousness, Distrust, Dissimulation and Falshood, it is a most just Consequence that it ought to go out with them; or that as

the Rise and Increasing of those Evils, were the Rise and Increasing of Oaths; so the Decreasing and Extirpation of those Evils should be the Decreasing and Abolishing of Oaths; otherwise there would be no Truth in the Rule of Contraries, nor Reason in that Ancient Maxim, *Cessante Ratione Legis cessat lex*: That the Ceasing of the Reason of the Law, is the Cessation of the Law: Expedients are no longer useful than to obtain what they are designed to. Means are swallowed up of their Ends; Diseased Men only want Remedies, and Lame Men Crutches; Honesty needs neither Whip nor Spur, She is Security for her self, and Men of Virtue will speak Truth without Extortings; for Oaths are a sort of Racks to the Mind, altogether useless where Integrity sways.

This we presume no Man of Reason will deny, *viz.* That *Swearing came in, and ought to go out with Perfidiousness*; and we hope it will be as easie to grant, at least it will be very easie to prove, That God hath frequently, both by Prophets and Apostles, reprov'd Men for such Impieties, and strictly required Truth and Righteousness; as, *Isa. 59, 3, 4. Jer. 9. 3, 5. Rom. 12. 19. Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. Col. 3. 8, 9, 10. Josh. 24. 14. 1 Sam. 12. 24. 1 King. 2. 4. Eph. 4. 25.* and by abundance of other Places in Holy Scripture. And that God should enjoin Man any thing that he hath not impower'd him to perform, is unworthy of any Man acknowledging a God, so much as to conceive. It is true, that the unprofitable Servant in the Parable is represented to entertain so blasphemous a Thought of his Maker, that he was so *hard a Master, as to reap where he did not sow*; but the same Parable also acquaints us of the dreadful Consequence of that Presumption: The Prophet *ic. 6. 8.* *Micha* preached another Doctrine, *The Lord hath shew'd thee, O Man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with thy God?* For this End hath the Grace of God appeared unto all Men, as speaks the Apostle Paul to Titus, that they should be taught to deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, which entering and over-running the World, made way among other Expedients for that of Oaths; so that to live that Life which needs No Oath, Man is both requir'd and impower'd: And as it is only his Fault and Condemnation if he doth not, so certainly there can be no Obligation upon him, who liveth that Life of

Truth and Integrity to perpetuate that which rose, and therefore ought to fall with Falshood and Perfidiousness; the *Reason* of the thing it self excuses him; for, he that fears Untruth, needs not Swear, because *he will not Lye*, to prevent which, Men exact Swearing: And he that doth not fear telling Untruth, what is his Oath worth? He that makes no Conscience of that Law that forbids Lying, will he make any Conscience of Forswearing? *Veracity* is the best *Security*, and Truth speaking the *Noblest Tye* and *Firmer Testimony* that can be given. This we declare to you to be both our Judgment and Attainment; We speak not Boastingly, but with Humility before the Great Lord of Heaven and Earth, to whose alone Power we do unanimously ascribe the Honour: He hath taught us to speak the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, as plainly and readily without an Oath, as with an Oath, and to abhor Lying, as much as Perjury; so that for us to Swear, were to take his Holy Name in vain: Nor are we therein singular; for that not only *Christian Fathers, Martyrs, and Doctors*, but also *Jews and Heathens* have had this Sense of the Rise and Use of Oaths, as will hereafter fully appear.

II. Our *second Reason*, why we refuse to comply with this Custom, and our Superiours ought not to impose it, is this, *It would Gratifie Distrusts, Humour Jealousies, and Subject Truth, and those that love it, to the same Checks, Curbs and Preventions that have been invented against Fraud; whereby the Honour of a Nobler Profession, the Power of a veracious Example, and the just Difference that ought to be made between Trustiness, and Diffidence, Integrity, and Perfidiousness, are utterly lost.*

How is it possible for Men to recover that ancient Confidence that good Men reposed in one another, if some don't lead the Way, and hold forth to the World a Principle and Conversation beyond the Necessity of such extraordinary Expedients? At present People lie all in a Heap; and the Greatest Truth finds no more Favour than the greatest Fraud; Fidelity must wear the Shackles worldly Prudence hath made against the Evil Consequences of Conzennage, and subject herself to the Customs brought up through Fraud, or go to Goal. Be pleased to consider, that *Trustiness* did not all at once quit

the World, nor will it return universally in the Twinkle of an Eye; Things must be allowed their time for Rise, Progress and Perfection: And if ever you would see the World planted with Primitive Simplicity and Faithfulness, rather cherish than make Men Sufferers for Refusing to Swear, especially if they offer the same Caution to the Law with him that will Swear. We dare not Swear, because we dare not Lye, and that it may appear to the World, that we can speak the Truth upon easier Terms than an Oath: For us then to be forc'd to Swear, is to make us do a needless thing, or to suspect our own Honesty. The first we dare not, because, as we have said, it is to take God's Name in vain; and we have no Reason to distrust our selves, being no ways conscious of fraudulent Purposes: Why then should we Swear? But much rather, why should we be imposed upon? It is a Saying ascribed to Solon, That a good Man should have that Repute as not to need an Oath; that it is a Diminution to his Credit to be put to Swear. It becomes not an Evangelical Man to Swear, was a Primitive Axiom; but more of that anon: In the mean while please to remember, you have a Practice among you, to exempt your Lords in several Cases, placing the Value of an Oath in their bare Avouchment upon their Honour, supposing that Men of those Titles should have so much Worth, as that their Word might be of equal Force with a Common Man's Oath: And if you will please to understand Honour in the Sense of the most ancient and best of Philosophers, to wit, VIRTUE, your own Custom gives Authority to our Reason, and makes you to say with us, That Virtue needs not Swear, much less have Oaths imposed upon her to tell Truth, the only Use of Oaths. It was Evangelically spoken of Clemens Alexandrinus, That a Good Life is a firm Oath; which was memorably verified by the Judges of Athens, who, though Heathens, forbade the Tendering of Xenocrates an Oath, because of their great Opinion of his Integrity, which was Three Hundred Years before Christ came in the Flesh.

III. Our third Reason for Non-conformity to your Custom is, the Fear we have, lest by Complying we should be guilty of Rebellion against the Discoveries God hath made to our Souls of his Ancient Holy Way of Truth, and consequently of concealing his Goodness to us, and depriving him of that Glory, and the World of that Advantage this honest Testimony may bring to him
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and them. He has redeem'd us from Fraud; 'Tis he only that hath begotten this Conscientiousness in us; and we dare not put this Light under a Bushel, neither can we deny his Work, or him to have the Honour of it. We intreat you, take this Tenderness of ours into *Christian* Consideration.

IV. *Oaths* have in great measure lost of the *Reason of their Primitive Institution*, since they have not that *Awful Influence* which was and only can be a Pretence for using them; on the contrary, they are become the *familiar parts of Discourse*, and help to make up a great share of the *A-la mode* Conversation; and those who decline their Company, or reprove their Practice, are to go for a sort of *Nice and squeamish Conscienc'd Men*. These *Swear* without *Fear* or *Wit*; yet would be thought *Witty* in *Swearing*, *Fearless* they can't: Some are Curious in their Impiety; *Old Oaths* are too dull for Men of their Invention, who almost shift *Oaths* with their *Fashions*: Nay, the most *Judicial Oaths* are commonly administred and taken with so little *Reverence and Devotion* (to say nothing of the *Perjuries*, that through Ignorance or Design, are too frequently committed) that we can't but cry out, *Oh the great Depravity that is in the World! How low is Man fallen from the Primitive Rule of Life?* Well may the *Prophet's Complaint* be ours, for, *If ever Land mourned because of OATHS*, with great Sadness we say it, *this doth*. And what more effectual Remedy can any People propose against the notorious Abuse and evil Consequence of *Swearing*, than *Truth speaking*? for those that dare not *Lye*, need not *Swear*; and they that make no Conscience of *Lying*, do not much fear an *Oath*, at least their Consciences are very crazy in taking it. This only Reason, were we destitute of all other Allegations, would be a strong Dissuasive from *Swearing*; for we hold God's Honour, and our Profession greatly concern'd to prove to so *False* an Age, that there is a People who are so far from *vain and false Swearing*, that they dare not *swear the Truth*; but whose *Yea* and *Nay* shall weigh against other Mens *Oaths*, and that with a free Offer of *sustaining double Punishment in case of Miscarriage*. Expedients may last a while, but *TRUTH* only shall have the Honour of *Conquering Falshood*, and *Virtue* will and must be greater than an *OATH*.

V. The *Omnipresency of God* rightly understood, shows the Usefulness of an *Oath*, and is with us a good Argument *against Swearing*; for what need is there of that Man's being aw'd into *true Evidence* by such sort of Attestations and Imprecations as make up the common Form of *Oaths*, who knows God to be *always present*, to reside and preside in his Soul, according to that *New and Everlasting Covenant* which he hath made, *that his People should be his Temple, that he would dwell IN them, and walk IN them.* Did the Children of Men know the Power, Glory and Majesty of God, WHOM the Apostle preach't *NIGH* to the *Athenians*, and declared to the *Ephe- sians* to be *Father of all, above all, through all, and IN THEM ALL*, there would be *no Oaths*, and but *few Words*, and those utter'd with Reverence and Truth.

VI. We do not find that *Oaths* answer this part of the End for which they are imposed, viz. *To convince those for whose sakes they are taken, of the Weight and Truth of a Man's Testimony, by Force of God's Witness joyn'd therewith*: For they don't behold God's concurring Witness by such an Assistance or Avenge of that Party, as the Truth or Falshood of his Testimony deserveth; for the Judgments of God are secret, and rarely so publicly seen to Men; perhaps once in an Age, that he should give any memorable Discovery of his good Will or Displeasure in such a Case; but whenever he doth it, it is not at Man's Appointment: And it is an evident Sign that God approveth not of that sort of Invocation, because he doth not answer them that invoke him, according to their Wish; as neither did he in the old Law or Custom of *Combating* appear on his side that had the better Title or Cause, as he promised in the Law of *Jealousie*, that their Thigh should not, and their Belly swell, &c.

VII. We look upon it to be no less than a presumptuous *Tempting of God, To summon him as a Witness*, not only to our Terrene, but trivial Business; such as we should doubtless account it an high Indignity always to solicit an Earthly Prince to give his Attendance about. What! Make God, the Great God of Heaven and Earth our Caution in Worldly Controversies, as if we would bind him, to obtain our own Ends? It is to make too bold with him, and to carry an undue Distance in our Minds towards him that made us; an Irreverence
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we can by no means away with, and upon which *Chrysostom* is most sharp, as will be seen anon. Besides it is vain and insolent to think that a *Man* when he pleateth, can make the *Great God of Heaven* a Witness or a Judge in any Matter, to appear by some signal Approbation or Judgment, to help or forsake him, as the Truth or Falseness of his Oath requires, when he saith, *So Help me God*.

VIII. Besides what we have hitherto urged in Defence of our selves against the Substance of the Oath, we justly except against the Form of it (which further adds to its Unlawfulness, and consequently to our Vindication) as by the Contents and kissing of the Book; Swearing by a Sign, being Heathenish, or Jewish. For the Romans held a Stone, and said, *If I deceive wittingly, then let Diespiter cast me out of my Goods, as I this Stone*: The Heroes Swore by lifting up of the Scepter: *Cæsar* Swore by his Head, his House, that is, Consecrated them to the Wrath of God, if he wittingly deceived, &c. The manner of the Jews is from *Gen. 14. 22.* that *Abraham* lift up his hand to God, *OR, If, &c.* putting the Hand under the Thigh, on the Head; passing betwixt Beasts divided, as God did to *Abraham*, &c. see more in *Lapid. Sophoc. in Antiq. v. 270. Scoliaft. Baptist. Hansen* of passing through Fire, swearing by the right Hand, &c.

*Fest. ad La-
pid. Polyb.
l. 3. c. 25.
Alex. ab
Alex. l. 5.
gen. dier. 10.
Cic. l. 5 Ep. 1.
Arist. 3.
Pol. 10.
Plin. in pan.
ad Trajan.
c. 64.*

The Use of *So help me God*, we find from the Law of the *Almans*, of King *Clotharius*: The laying on of three Fingers above the Book, is to signifie the Trinity; the Thumb and the little Finger under the Book, are to signifie the Damnation of Body and Soul, if they forswear, *So help me God*.

*Lindenbro.
c. 3. sect. 7.*

Further be pleased to consider that the *English* Custom has very much overgone *English* Law in this Business of Oaths; they were anciently but solemn Attestations, As the Lord liveth, &c. which are now improv'd to Imprecations, *So help me God and the Contents of this Book*: Though it was so of old at Combat; but that concerns not our Case. For the Kissing of the Book, that is also *Novil*: Indeed after they rise from solemn Attestations, to Imprecations, the Law required a Sight and Touch of the Book: The *Saxon* Jurors were *Sacra tenentes*; In the first *Norman* Times it was *Sacris tactis*; and in later Writs, *Evangelis tactis*; nay, the Priest's Hand was on his Breast (in *Matthew Paris*) not upon the Book. However Few

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and *Gentile*, Superstition and Ceremony, have made up the present *Form* of *Oaths*, which the true *Christian man* neither wants, nor we conceive, ought to perform; much less impose where *Tenderness* by *sober Consciences* is pleaded, and equal *Caution* offer'd to the *Law* for the *Integrity* of *Yea* and *Nay*.

IX. But were we also destitute of this *Plea*, and the usual *Oaths* of our *Country* the most inoffensively form'd, and best penn'd that ever any were, we have both the *Example* and *Precept* of our *Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, to oppose to any such *Practice*; for in all that *History* deliver'd to us by the four *Evangelists*, we never read him to have used any further *Asseveration* than what in *English* amounts to *Verely, Verely*, or *Truly, Truly, I say unto you*: Thus by his *Example* exciting us the more readily to obey his express *Prohibition* of *Swearing*, *Mat. 5. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.* which runs thus. *Again, Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old-time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths; but I say unto you SWEAR NOT AT ALL; neither by Heaven for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let your Word be YEA, YEA; NAY, NAY; for whatsoever is MORE than THESE cometh OF EVIL.*

He here prohibits even the *lesser Oaths*, as they thought them that revered *Swearing* by the *Name of the Lord*, which in old time he suffer'd by reason of the *Fallenness* of their *Hearts*, and great *Proneness* to *Idols*; even as *Moses* permitted them to put away their *Wives*, which in the precedent Verse also is disallowed by *Christ*, though with the *Exception* of *Fornication*; but *Swearing* without any *Exception*: He doth not say, *Swear not except before a Magistrate* (though he says, Put not away thy *Wife*, except for the *Cause* of *Fornication*) but *SWEAR NOT AT ALL*: why? because it is *OF EVIL*; which reason reaches the *Oaths* taken before *Magistrates*, as well as *other Oaths*; for *Distrust* and *Unfaithfulness* are the *Cause* of one as well as the other: And there is equal Reason in that respect, that a *Master* should swear in private to his *Servant* at his *Entrance*, that he will pay him his *Wages*, as that the *Servant* should swear in publick to a *Magistrate*,

that at his Departure his Master would not pay him his Wages; both which *Oaths* the Certainty of their Words, their *Yea* being *Yea*, and their *Nay* being *Nay*, makes *vain and superfluous*.

Obj. We are not unsensible of the common *Objection* that is made against this Allegation of our Master's Command, *That he only prohibited Vain Oaths in Communication*: But if the words of the *Text* and *Context* be consider'd, every Oath will be proved *Vain and Unlawful*; for Christ's Prohibition was not a meer Repetition of what was *forbidden* under the Law, but what the Law *allowed*, as Bishop *Sanderson* well observeth; *It was not needful that Christ should forbid what was forbidden in it self, or was always Unlawful, which vain Swearing was and is by the third Commandment, Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; therefore Christ exceeded the Prohibition of the Law*: And the whole Chapter is a Demonstration of a more excellent Righteousness than that which either needed or used *Oaths*; for Christ brings *Adultery* from the *Act* to the *Thought*; in lieu of *Revenge*, he commands *Suffering*, and extends *Charity* not only to Friends, but Enemies; in the Place controverted; in the room of such *Oaths* and Vows as ought to be perform'd unto the Lord, he introduces *Yea* and *Nay*, with a most absolute **SWEAR NOT AT ALL**. This was the Advance he made in his excellent *Sermon* upon the Mount; he wound up things to an higher pitch of *Sanctity* than under the Law, or the Childish State of the *Jews* could receive. Again, saith he, *Ye have heard of old time, thou shalt not Forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths; but I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL*; as plain, general and emphatical a Prohibition as can be found in Holy Scripture. However, those Persons that usually Advocate for the Continuance of *Oaths* under the Gospel, tell us, it is not a *general Prohibition*, but is limited to *Swearing by Creatures, either by Heaven, Earth, Jerusalem, or Head, &c.* Which is wholly inconsistent with the Scope of the Place, as we shall make appear from these Four Considerations. 1st, The *Prohibition* reaches as well to serious as vain *Oaths*, such as Men made, if they Swore at all, and ought to make to God only; for to him alone should they perform them, and they are accountable for them: These very allowed *Oaths* of

Bishop R.
Sanderson de
Jur. Oblig.
p. 141.

Old Time, are the first prohibited by Jesus Christ; *It was said of Old, thou shalt not Forswear thy self; but I say, SWEAR NOT AT ALL.* 'Tis true, it is not particularized what Oaths they were to keep of old; but in general Terms, that they were not to Forswear themselves; and it is clear that God enjoined them that would Swear, that they should only Swear by *his Name*. Now what can be hence inferred more evidently, than that Men ought not to swear those Oaths under the Gospel, which they might swear, and ought not to forswear, but to perform unto the Lord in the Law. 2dly, Christ himself gives the Explanation of his own Words, Chap. 23. 16, 17. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. where he teacheth us, *That he that swears by the Temple, swears by it, and by him that dwells therein; and he that shall swear by Heaven, swears by the Throne of God, and by him that sits thereon: So that he that swears by the Head, swears by him that made it: and he that swears by the Earth, swears by him that created it; which leaves no room for the Objection, for it is as if Christ should have said, I not only command you not to Forswear, but perform, as it was said to them of old time; but I charge you, NOT TO SWEAR AT ALL: I mean, not only that you should not swear by God, and those Oaths that the Pharisees account binding; but also, that you should not so much as swear by those lesser Oaths, as they esteem them, and which they are wont to swear by; for they are not less nor more allowable, in that they that swear by them, swear by him that is the Author and Maker of them: wherefore being of the same Nature with the other, I forbid you to swear by them, as well as by those Oaths that were of old time made, and ought not to be broke, but perform'd unto the Lord; for this is one of my great Commandments, which they must keep, that will be my Disciples; that is to say SWEAR NOT AT ALL.* Our 3d Inducement to believe this to have been the Intention of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the concurrent Testimony of the Apostle James, which is not only a Repetition of his Master's Doctrine, but an Addition and Illustration, we hope sufficient to determine the present Question with every unprejudic'd Reader: *But above all things, my Brethren (saith he) swear not; which runs parallel with Swear not at all: The Negative is as general and forcible. He proceeds, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth; Words of equal Import with the*

the latter part of Christ's Prohibition; and as if he had fore-
 seen the Cavils of our Swearing Adversaries, he adds, *neither
 by any other Oath*; which though as clear as the Sun, if yet
 for their last shift they should tell us, that he only meant *any
 other Oath* of that kind, not that he prohibited *Swearing by
 the Name of the Lord*, it will not do their Business; for that
 Christ hath already assured us, *Whosoever swears by Heaven,
 swears by him that sits thereon*; and the very next words show
 that it was not his Design only to prohibit *vain*, but plainly
 to exclude *all Swearing*; *But let your Yea be Yea, and your
 Nay, Nay, lest ye fall into Condemnation*; else why had he not
 said, *but you may swear by the Name of God before a Magi-
 strate*? Why must *Neither by any other Oath* be added after
 such a plain Prohibition, as, *My Brethren, Above all things Swear
 not*? And why must *Yea and Nay* be substituted in the room of
 an *Oath*, if it was yet intended by the Apostle, that *Christians*
 might rise higher in their Evidence, than a bare *Affirming*, or
Denying? that is, Though their *Yea* be never so truly *Yea*, and
 their *Nay* never so sincerely *Nay*, or the very Truth of the
 Matter be spoken, which is the Import of the Words; yet
 that *they ought to swear*. What is this but to *contradict* the
 natural Tendency of the Command of Christ and his Apo-
 stles? which is plainly this; *If your Yea be Yea, it is enough;
 if your Nay be Nay, it is sufficient*; for *Christians ought not
 to swear*, if they do, *they fall into Condemnation*, in that they
 break their Master's Command, who hath told them, that
Whatsoever is more than Yea or Nay, cometh of Evil, which is
 the Ground of all Oaths; for they ought to mean so simply
 and honestly in what they *say*, as that they should never need
 to *swear* in order to tell the Truth. Our 4th and last Consi-
 deration, and that which to us seemeth of great Moment to
 clear up our Lord and Saviour's sense, and rescue the Passage
 from the Violence of *Objectors*, is this Clause, *For whatsoever
 is MORE then Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay, cometh of Evil*. This
 cannot be intended of more Words than *Yea, Yea, and Nay,
 Nay*, provided they are not of an higher Strain, but of the
 same Degree of Speech, importing a plain Assertion or Denial
 of a thing; for it is not the Number, but Nature of the
 Words spoken, that is here prohibited: Nor can it be only
 understood of *Perjury*; for every body knows that to be evil

in it self, which is *more* than that which cometh OF, or because of Evil: Therefore it must be understood as well of Swearing, as of Forswearing, which is not Evil it self, yet cometh of, or by Reason of Evil in the World: Nor is there any thing *more than Yea and Nay* besides Perjury, which can be intended, but an Oath; and therefore that was intended. Christ doth not only prohibit Evil it self, but that which is Evil by Superfluity to Evangelical Sincerity; and that Swearing is (be it of what sort it will) wherever Yea is Yea, and Nay is Nay. In short, If what is *more then Yea and Nay*, cometh of Evil; then because any Swearing, as well as Forswearing, is *more then Yea and Nay*; it follows, that any Swearing cometh of Evil, and therefore ought to be rejected of Christians. Nor will our English Translation of λόγος shelter our Objectors: For, Communication doth not exclude those many Cases that require Evidences among Men, no nor any the least Action of Man's Life; on the contrary, they have a great Place in Human Communication, which is comprehensive of the various Discourses and Transactions of a Man's Life, as 2 Kings 9. 11. 2 Sam. 3. 17. Eph. 4. 29. Col. 3. 8. 1 Cor. 15. 33. It is a word of the same Extent with Conversation, which takes in all that can happen between Man and Man in this World. Thus the Psalmist, *To him that ordereth his Conversation aright*; Psalm 50. 23. So the Apostle, *Let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel*, Phil. 1. 27. Besides, λόγος may be rendered Word, as in Job. 1. 1. and the Italian and French Translations have it, *Let your Word be Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay*; as much as if Christ had said, As I do not only condemn the Act for Adultery, which the Law did, but also the Conception of the Mind; and not only Murder, but Revenge likewise; so I do not only condemn Forswearing, which is done to my hand in the Law of God, but prohibit Swearing at all; for I make that to be Unlawful, which the Law doth not call Unlawful: Therefore when your Evidence is called for, *Swear not at all*, but let your Word be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay; that is, Do not speak Untruth; for that is Evil: Don't Swear; for that comes of Evil. To conclude; People Swear to the End they may speak Truth; Christ would have Men speak Truth, to the End they might not Swear: he would not have his Followers

lowers upon such base Reserves, but their Word to carry the Weight of an Oath in it; that as others ought not to be guilty of Perjury, *Christians* ought not to be guilty of Lying: For such is the Advance from *Moses* to *Christ*, *Jew* to *Christian*, that as the *Christian* needs not the *Jew's* Curb, so his Lye is greater than the *Jew's* Perjury, because his Yea or Nay ought to be of more Value than the other's Oath.

X. And lastly; Besides these expresse Prohibitions, *Swearing* is forbidden by the *very nature of Christianity*, and unworthy of him that is *the Author of it*, who came not to implant so *imperfect* a Religion, as that which needed Oaths, or should leave Fraud, the Ground of Swearing, unextirpated; but to promulgate that Gospel which retrieves ancient Sincerity, builds up Waste Places, restores those Breaches Oaths entred at, and leads into the Ancient Holy Paths of Integrity they never trod in: He is that Powerful Lord, which cureth the Diseases of all them that come unto him, and Mystical Serpent exalted, that relieves all that believably look up to him: His Office is to make an End of *Sin*, that made way for Swearing, and introduce that Everlasting Righteousness which never needs it. The Religion he taught, is no less than Regeneration and Perfection; such Veracity as hath not the least Wavering; Sincerity throughout, that it might not only exceed the Righteousness of the Swearing *Jews*, but that Law which permitted it till the Times of Restitution, which he brought to the Degenerated World, who said, *Swear not at all*; for the Law that permitted Oaths, was given by *Moses*, but *Grace and Truth*, that ends them, came by *Jesus Christ*, who therefore prohibits them. And not only is this Gospel of *Christ*, or the Holy Religion he taught, of so pure and excellent a Nature; but those who will be his Disciples, are obliged to obey it, inasmuch that he himself hath said, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments; and if ye keep my Commandments, ye shall abide in my Love. Again, Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you: If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me: For I say unto you, that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter the Kingdom of Heaven: Be ye therefore Perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* These are the weighty

Joh. 14. 15

Mat. 5. 10. 4

Mat. 16. 2

Mat. 5. 20
48.

weighty Sayings of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and certainly, he who breaks not the *least Commandment* (forbidden Vers. 19.) who *can Suffer* rather than Revenge, *love Enemies*; and *be perfect*, as his Heaveuly Father is perfect, is *above the Obligation of an Oath unto Truth-speaking*. His Disciples preacht not another Gospel than their Master's, who

1 Thes. 5. 23. prayed, that those who believed *might be sanctified THROUGH-OUT, in Body, Soul and Spirit*, which is a perfect Removal

Phil. 3. 14. of the Ground of Swearing; and they were exhorted to *press after the Mark of the Price of this High and Holy Calling, until they should all come unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ Jesus* : For even hereunto

Ephes. 4. 13. (saith Peter) *were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his Steps, who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth* : And saith John,

1 Pet. 2. 21, 23. *As he is, so are we in this World*. If No Guile be found in our Mouths, then No Oaths; for they came because of Guile : And if we ought to *resemble him* in this World, then must our Communication be *Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay*; that is, we must live the *Life of Truth*, and speak the *Words of Truth*, which ought to be of *greater Force than Oaths*, that come of Evil. If the Righteousness of the Law ought to be fulfilled in us, we ought not to Swear, because we ought to be so Righteous as not to Lye. This is Evangelical; for as he that conceives not a foul or revengeful Thought, need not to purge himself of Adultery and Murder : Neither is there any Reason, that Man should purge himself of Lying, by Swearing, that doth not so much as countenance an untrue Thought. The Language of the same Apostle to the Ephesians, further explains

Ephes. 4. 20, 22, 23, 25. this Evangelical Evidence, *But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus; That ye put off concerning the former Conversation the Old Man, which is Corrupt, according to the Deceitful Lusts, and be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind, and that you put on the New Man, which after God ii created in Righteousness, and true Holiness* : Wherefore **PUTTING AWAY LYING, SPEAK EVERY MAN TRUTH** with his Neighbour : Beyond which, there can be no Assurance given or desired. And if Christians ought never to Lye, it is most certain they need never to Swear; for Swearing is built upon

upon Lying; Take away Lying, and there remains no more Ground for Swearing; Truth-speaking comes in the room thereof: And this not only the *Christian Doctrine* teaches and requires; but *Christ*, the blessed Author of it, is ready to *work in the Hearts of the Children of Men*, would they but come and learn of him, *who is Meek, Lowly, filled with Grace and Truth*. And we must needs say, It is a shameful thing, and very Dishonourable to the Christian Religion, that those who pretend themselves to be the Followers of Christ, for so true Christians ought to be, should so degenerate from his Example and Doctrine, as to want and use scaring Asseverations, dispenced with in some of the weakest Times of Knowledge, and such horrible Imprecations (never known to ancient *Jews* and *Christians*) to ascertain one another of their Faith and Truth: Religion must needs have suffered a great Ebb, and *Christianity* a fearful Eclipse, since those brighter Ages of its Profession: For Bishop *Gauden* himself, in his Discourse of Oaths, confesses, That the Ancient Christians were so strict and exact, that there was no need of an Oath among them; yea, they so kept up the Sanctity and Credit of their Profession among Unbelievers, that it was Security enough in all Cases to say, *Christianus sum, I am a Christian*.

But to fortifie what we have hitherto urged in Defence of our Judgment and Practice; and to the End it may more fully appear, that our Tenderness in this great Case of Oaths comes not from any Sower, Sullen or Superstitious Humour, or that we would trouble the World with any New-fangled Opinion, we shall produce the concurrent Testimonies of several Famous and Good Men for above these Two Thousand Years, among *Gentiles, Jews* and *Christians*, enough to make an *Oecumenical Council*; We shall cite them out of the best Editions we have been able to procure, and as truly and punctually as we can render them, digested in Order of Time.

AN ABSTRACT of some of the Numerous TESTIMONIES of Gentiles, Jews, and Christians, in dislike of Oaths, &c.

Simocat.
Epist. 33.
F.

1. **SIMOCATUS**, '*Perfidiousness appears securer than Faithfulness; and an Oath imposed is a fit Engine for Deceit.* Strange! that faithful Yea and Nay is stop't, when Perfidiousness with an Oath can pass all Guards, Courts and Offices. He manifestly links Oaths and Perfidiousness, and gives the Praise to Faithfulness.

Joseph. de
bello Ju-
daico. l. 2.
c. 7.

2. '*The Esseni or Essæans (saith Josephus) keep their Promise, and account every Word they speak, of more force than if they had bound it with an Oath; and they skun Oaths worse than Perjury; for they esteem him condemn'd for a Liar, who is not believed without calling God to witness.*

Athanasius
on the
Passion of
Christ.

3. '*The Evangelical Sentence of the Lord is, Let your Yea, be Yea, and your Nay, Nay: Thus far we, who are in Christ, may confirm our Words with Asseverations, and with no further Progress let us flee to or approach Oaths, that we alledge not God for Witness for Corruptible Money's sake, especially since Moses so sets down the Law, Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in a vain thing. For if any one is plainly worthy to name God, he is also worthy of Belief: For, whosoever is meet for greater things, he will be much more fit for less: On the contrary, if he be not worthy Belief, that he may be Credited without an Oath, surely he is not one that is worthy to name God. If he be not faithful in Word, how will God by any means be the Witness of an Oath for him who is destitute of Faith, to which God hath Respect? Again, The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him in Truth; by which alone the Lord can be called upon: Wherefore why do they Swear by God, who are not trusted even in small Matters? Otherwise, an Oath is a Testimony of Truth, and not a Judge of Businesses, such Men do Swear, not that they may signifie Businesses, but that they may confirm the Truth; and that they may shew, that those things which they produce, are without Lying: If therefore be that Swears bath Faith and Truth, WHAT USE IS THERE OF AN*

Athanasius
his Ab-
horrence
and Deri-
sion of
Oaths.

‘ AN OATH? But if he hath no Faith nor Truth, why do we
 ‘ undertake such an Impiety, that for poor *silly Men*, and
 ‘ those mortal too, we call to Witness GOD, that is above Men?
 ‘ For if it be a base Part to call to witness an Earthly King to
 ‘ the lowest Judicatures, as one that is greater than both Actors
 ‘ and Judges; why do we CITE him that is uncreated, to crea-
 ‘ ted things, and make God to be despised of Men? HOUT, ^{Athanasius}
 ‘ that exceeds all Iniquity and Audaciousness: What then is ^{his Reason}
 ‘ to be done? NO MORE but that our YEA be YEA, and ^{and dis-}
 ‘ our NAY be NAY; and in short, THAT WE DO NOT ^{like of}
 ‘ LYE. ^{Oaths.}

4. Chrysostom, in those days very Famous in the Church, ^{Chrysostom}
 and therefore styl’d the Golden Doctor; saith in his 9th Ho- ^{on Acts of}
 mily on Acts 3. Whence then came in an Oath? ‘ When ^{the Apo-}
 ‘ Evils increased, when all things became topsie-turvey, when ^{Hom. 9.}
 ‘ they inclined to Idolatry then verily when they appear’d un-
 ‘ faithful, they called God to witness, as giving a Surety for Se-
 ‘ curity for their Words; for an Oath is a Suretiship, where
 ‘ their Behaviours have no Trust or Credit. — Again, what
 ‘ shall I say of Oaths of the Courts that are left? for there
 ‘ thou canst say no such thing; for there for Sixpence; both
 ‘ Oaths and Perjuries are made: For, because a Thunder-Bolt
 ‘ doth not come down from above, and all things are not over-
 ‘ turned, thou standest, and WILT * BIND GOD: Why? * An Oath
 ‘ that Thou mayst get Herbs and Shoes for a small Price, thou ^{is a Bind-}
 ‘ callest him to witness. ‘ Do we therefore think we do not Sin, ^{ing of God}
 ‘ because they are not punished? This is the Lord’s Mercy, not ^{for our}
 ‘ our Desert. Swear by thy own Child, Swear by thy self; ^{Security.}
 ‘ say, So let the Officer keep from my Sides: But thou art a- ^{A Pathe-}
 ‘ fraid of thy Sides; IS GOD MORE VILE, more Contemp- ^{tical Cen-}
 ‘ tible than thy Head? Say, So may I not be blind? But Christ ^{sure of}
 ‘ to spareth us, that he FORBIDS US TO SWEAR EVEN ^{Oaths, and}
 ‘ BY OUR OWN HEAD. But we do so despise the Glory of ^{them that}
 ‘ God, that he is drawn every where: Ye know not what God ^{use them,}
 ‘ is, and with what a Mouth he ought to be invocated. More- ^{even in}
 ‘ over, when we speak of any Virtuous Man, we say, Wash ^{Courts.}
 ‘ thy Mouth, that so thou mayst be heedful. But now we vain-
 ‘ ly distract that Honourable Name, which is a Name above
 ‘ every Name, which is Wonderful in all the Earth, which the
 ‘ Devils bearing do tremble at: OH MOST CONTEMPTI-

With what ten-
lerness
God's
Name
should be
used.

BLE CUSTOM WHICH HATH DONE THAT! *Lastly,*
 'If thou shalt impose on any a Necessity of Swearing in the
 'Holy House, how horrible an Oath dost thou enjoyn, if thou
 'dost so? Is it that we abuse that simply, *this not so?* Ought
 'not one even to Dread when God is named? But even among
 'the Jews this Name was so Reverend, *that it was written on*
 'the Plate of the Mitre, and none might bear those Letters of
 'the Name of God, but only the High-Priest: And now also
 'we so bear his Name tenderly. If it was not lawful for all
 'to Name God simply, how great Audaciousness is it to call
 'it in Witness?

5. DRUTHMARUS on *Matth. 5.* 'Lest the Jews should
 'Swear by Idols Names, the Lord *suffered them to Swear by*
 'his own Name.

——The Lord taught us Perfection, that such Trust is to
 'be among *Christians*, *that there should be no need to INTER-*
 'POSE the Name of God for Witnesses.

Bibliotheca
peter pa-
trum.

6. EUTHYMIUS ZAGABONUS: 'Let your Words be *Yea*,
 'Yea; Nay, Nay, 'Let your Speech be when ye affirm,
 'Yea; and when ye deny, Nay; and use only these for, or in-
 'stead of Oaths to Confirmation, and no other than *Yea* and
 'Nay; what is adjoyned besides these, he calleth an Oath.

On *Mat. 5.*

7. ALPHONSUS *de Avendano*: 'Oh! how Sincere and
 'True would the Lord make his *Christians*, that all Affir-
 'mations should be included in Three Letters only, all Denials
 'in other Three, that the Truth should be so familiar to us,
 'as to be included in the Compendium of Three Letters?

On *Mat. 5.*
p. 23, 24.

8. JACOBUS FABER, 'It is the part of a Spiritual Man,
 'not only Not to Swear in a Vain Thing, but also not in any
 'Serious thing; for, you which are such, are true: Unto
 'true Men it's sufficient that a true Man gain Belief, if he say,
 'that the Lord hath commanded *Yea*, *Yea*, in Affirming; *Nay*,
 'Nay, in Denying: But if with incredulous and Evil Men a
 'Speech also be had concerning a serious and necessary Mat-
 'ter, why shall one Swear for their Badness, that he may gain
 'Belief with them? Who ever spake more seriously than our
 'Saviour? Who more necessary things? Yet he never used
 'other Speech than that, *Verely, verely, I say unto you*, or
 'some other such like, which was a true Form or Manner to
 'them that Swore not.

9. SUAREZ: 'He affirmeth, Christ did not Swear, be-
 ' cause that which he could not lawfully do, he could not
 ' simply do; but he could not lawfully Swear, therefore he
 ' could not at all: But that he never Swore, is proved, be-
 ' cause that he himself commanded or counselled, *Not to swear*
 ' *at all*; but simply to speak, *Yea, it is*; *Nay, it is not*, &c.
 ' therefore ought to go before the Example. It is spoken of
 ' him only sometimes that he said *Amen*, or *Truly*, or *Verily*,
 ' which we have before shewed to be no Particle of Swearing.

——It is impossible that Man can bring God for a Witness,
 ' although he would never so fain: Therefore the Name of
 ' God is taken in vain, as often as it is taken to Swear; there-
 ' fore it is Evil in it self.

——Grant this were possible, to bring God for a Witness,
 ' it seems disorderly to bring the Person of God to confirm
 ' Men's Busineses, Covenants, or Words, because it is disor-
 ' derly to order things of an higher Order to those that are
 ' inferiour: Much more is it disorderly, to mix the Sacred
 ' Authority of God to the prophane (or common) Words, and
 ' Busineses of Men.

10. JOAC. CAMER. and P. LOSELER VILLERIUS's
 Marginal Note upon *Mat. 5. 37.* 'Whatsoever you vouch,
 ' vouch it *barely*; and whatsoever you deny, deny it *barely*,
 ' without any more words.

11. Bible, Imprinted, Anno. 1559. in Quarto. [*What is more*
is of Evil.] Marginal Note, 'From an evil Conscience, or
 ' from the Devil.

12. PETER CHARRON, Doctor of Law in Paris, in his
 Book of Wisdom, Chap. 37. 'An Oath, what is it, but a
 ' Symptom and shameful Mark of Distrust, Infidelity, Igno-
 ' rance, Humane Infirmitie, both in him that Requires it, that
 ' Gives it, that Ordains it (alluding to Christ's Words, saith
 ' he) *Quod amplius est a malo*; What is more, is from the Devil.

13. BEZA, on *James 5. 12.* 'That which you have to
 ' say or affirm, speak or affirm it *simply*, and *without an Oath*;
 ' and that you have to deny, deny it *Simply* and *Flatly*.

The *Yea* and *Nay* of a true Christian is capable of all the
 good Services of an Oath, if the Sanctity of his Faith and
 Profession be allowed: And if any Prejudices come to a Man's
 Friend, Country, or Self, because his *Yea* and *Nay* is rejected,

it will never lie at his Door, who offers all Christ permits him, and his Conscience will dispense with; but on the *Distruster's* Side, especially when he that, in Conscience can't Swear, offers as large CAUTION as he that SWEARS, and is willing to undergo *Equal Punishment*, in Case of Untruth, that the other by Law sustains for *Perjury*.

Obj. Q. 'Tis true, and you say well, Oaths only serve till Truth-speaking comes, and you say, it is come to you; But how shall we know that?

Ans. We intreat you to try us: No Man can be justly condemn'd before he be guilty; nor reputed guilty in the Sight of Men, till discover'd: You will have as easie a Way to catch us at Lying, as others at Forswearing; and if you find us such, inflict the same Punishment for Our Lye, which is enacted for their Perjury.

Be pleased to consider:

I. The Rise of OATHS.

II. The Prohibition of CHRIST.

III. The Judgment of so many good HEATHENS.

IV. The Belief and Practice of so many Primitive CHRISTIANS, Celebrious FATHERS, Godly MARTYRS, and Learned PROTESTANTS.

V. The Caution they use, who in any Sense allow of an Oath.

VI. That it is matter of Faith; and What is not of Faith; is Sin: And that we cannot alter our Minds without Conviction, unless we should turn Hypocrites; and what Security can or will you have from our Oaths, who must first make us to break the Tye of our own Conscience before we can take them? It can't be thought, we should keep with you, when you make us break with our selves.

VII. Consider what express Scripture we have for it, and that in the Judgment and Martyrdom of many good and famous Persons.

VIII. Be pleased to weigh the great PERJURY that is now in our World, and daily Numerous Oaths belcht forth by some, to show they dare be bold with Sacred Things; by others, to vent Passion; by too many (as they impiously think) to grace their Matter, whilst others have so great Doubt of their own Credit, that they Swear, to drive, what they say, home; and not a few use it, meerly to fill up vacant places,

places, being barren of better Matter. We think that instead of taking Advantage against us for *Not Swearing*, in so *For-swearing an Age*, we should rather receive *Intouragement* for speaking *That Truth without an Oath*, which others are *compell'd* to by *Oath*, if yet they speak it. *False speaking* necessitated the Use of *Oaths* (say many) But *Oaths* proving now not the *Remedy*, but the *Disease*, what better *Expedient* can be used than to *come back* to *Truth-speaking*, which Endeth *Oaths* in their first Cause, or Occasion at least: However, that such as are *not Sick*, should be oblig'd to take the *Potions of the Sick*, only to keep them Company, That seems *Unreasonable*.

IX. Be pleas'd to consider the perishing *Difficulties* we meet withal in our *Commerce* in the World, particularly as *Creditors*, *Executors*, *Merchants*, *Ship-Masters*, *Apprentices*, &c. Men making us *pay* because of our *Tenderness* in this Matter. Oh the *OPPRESSION* that is exercis'd in *Petty Courts* and *Sessions* upon many *Hundreds* of us, who know not which way to *Right* our selves, an *Oath* still being required in the Case; the *Refusal* of which for *Conscience sake*, exposing us to great *Losses*, both of *Estate*, *Liberty*, and sometimes *Life*, by *Tedious* and *Cruel Imprisonments*.

X. But the *Loss* and *Trouble* is not always our own; Our *Neighbours* frequently become *Sufferers* against our *Wills*: *First*, In that we can *perform no Office* in common with them, however otherwise able to discharge it. *Secondly*, Nor can we serve them in the Capacity of *Witnesses*, which Qualification goes a great way towards the *Maintenance of Justice*; and all because our *solemn Word* will not be received instead of an *Oath*: Relieving us here is a double *Benefit*, for our *Neighbours* share with us in it; and it manifestly tends to the *Preservation of Society*. And whatever any may please to think of us, we are as willing and ready to contribute all *Honest Assistance* to the *Maintenance of Justice*, and answering the Ends of *Government*, according to our *Ability* and *Conscience*, as any Sort of Men that live under it.

XI. And *Lastly*, We intreat you further to consider, that our *CAUTION* is as large as the Man that *Swears*: For though you make a Difference between him that tells an *Untruth*, and he that *Forswears*, in Favour of the former; yet we cheerfully

submit

Submit our selves to the Punishment of the Perjured, if we break our WORD; do you but please to take us into equal Priviledge with the Swearer: If there be any Dammage, we conceive it is done to Us, who sustain the same Punishment for an Untruth, which is the only Due of Perjury; and if you condescend to yield us the Kindness of the one, we offer our Persons to answer the just Severity of the other.

And that what we have hitherto said, may not be thought a thing impracticable, we shall present you with the Judgment and Edicts of Foreign Governments, taken out of Two Letters of the Grave of Nassou, and Prince of Orange, to the Magistrates of the City of Middelburg, in Behalf of the Menists there.

" The Petitioners Intreating therefore, and humbly begging his Excellency, that looking upon their Case with Compassion, he would take due Course about it, especially seeing that the aforesaid Petitioners do proffer, that their YEA passing for an Oath, the Transgressors thereof should be punished as Oath-Breakers.

" Therefore his Excellency having considered the Premises, and having maturely deliberated upon the same, hath, with the previous Advice of the Governour and Council of Zeeland, Ordered and Appointed, Ordereth and Appointeth hereby, That the aforesaid Petitioners YEA, shall be received by the Magistrates of the aforesaid City instead of an OATH, provided, that the Transgressors thereof shall be punished as Oath-Breakers, and Perjured Persons.

This done under his Excellency's Name and Seal, in the City of Middelburgh, upon the 26th January, 1577.

Guilliaume de Nassou.

By my Gracious Lord, the PRINCE, Subscribed,
De Baudemont.

Out of the Second LETTER.

" And therefore we Charge and Order you expressly, To desist all further Molestation or Hinderance of the said Menists, in their Merchandize or Handicrafts, to gain their Livelihood for their Wives and Children, &c.

Subscribed by Copy,

De Baudemont.

This

This was the *Care*, this the *Condescension* of other Governments, for the Relief of Persons under our Circumstances: And we take Liberty to affirm, That the Trade and Wealth of the *United Provinces*, are owing more to the Ingenuity and Industry of those Indulg'd *Dissenters*, than to them of the National Religion, who would have slugg'd and tyranniz'd all into Poverty, and Vassallage.

Have Regard to our *Suffering Condition*, we beseech you, and shew your selves both Natural to a Member (be we reputed the meanest) of your own Civil Body, and so far Lovers of him who said, *Swear not at all*, as not to continue us Sufferers for not acting against his Command, at least, our Sense of it, and therein of our own Conscience; But make some *Provision* for us, as well as other Countries have done before you, as in your Wisdom you shall think meet; that all those, who are of the Society of the People called *Quakers*, and known of themselves to be so, *shall not be molested for the future upon the Account of Swearing, but their Solemn YEA or NAY shall be taken in lieu thereof; and their Untruth, or Breach of Word, Punishable as Perjury.*

So far out of the TREATISE OF OATHS.

The following is An ABSTRACT of a Declaration from the People called *QUAKERS*, to the KING, and both Houses of Parliament, then Sitting at Westminster, 1666.

What they can say instead of an Oath.

THIS form of words which Christ hath laid down in *Mat. 5.* And the Apostle *James* taught in his General Epistle, *Ch. 5.* We who are called *Quakers*, can stand *By and To.*

Christ said, ye have heard, that it hath been said of old time, by them, *thou shalt not forswear thy self* (which was the false Oath; but performs thy Oaths to the Lord, which was the true Oaths, which were to be taken before the Judges, Officers and Magistrates, to lend Controversies, and be performed unto the Lord: But Christ said, *Now I say unto you, Swear not at all, &c.* But let your Yea, be Yea, and your Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil. Therefore this Yea, yea, and Nay, nay, wherein Christ doubles his words, to make them of force, and sets them over and above an Oath; We will stand *By and To.*

And

And also in *John* the 14th, and 18th. The Apostle taught, and said, *Swear not by Heaven, nor by Earth, (neither) nor by any other Oath;* (But he also sets up that which is above all Oaths) which is Christ's words *yea, yea, and nay, nay,* which form of sound words, the Apostle doubles as Christ did. When he said, in his repeating over Christ's words; *Ye shall swear no Oaths, least ye fall into Condemnation.* There are the Commands of Christ and the Apostle, which we will stand by. *To Wit; yea, yea, and nay, nay.*

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And also another Example you may see, *Mat. 18. 16, 17.* where Christ saith in the Gospel-times to the Church, *That by the mouth of two or three Witnesses every word may be established;* And this Christ spake in matter of Differences that might happen among Christians, but said nothing of an Oath; for Oaths he looked before. And the Apostle taught, *That every Man should speak the Truth to his Neighbour;* not that they should Swear the Truth: And also tells the Christian Church, *that in the mouth of two or three Witnesses every word should be established,* and not in the mouth of two or three Swearers, *1 Cor. 13. 1.* So here you may see, that it is no new thing to deny Swearing; for Christ, and the Apostles, and the Ancient Fathers, and the holy Martyrs testified against it, and denied it. And we cannot give forth a better form of Oaths to testify the Truth than that which Christ hath laid down, which is *Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay;* which the Apostle, and the Fathers, and the Martyrs preached, and practised, and suffered for; And if we, when we are called to any Office, or upon a Jury, or to bear Witness, do break our *Yea, Yea, or Nay, Nay,* which is Christ's form of sound Words, and which the Apostles preached, and the Martyrs suffered for, which we stand by, and by; then let us suffer the same Penalty as they that can swear and break their Oaths. For all Oaths, Vows, Promises, Types, Shadows and Figures, which were among the Jews, Christ ends, and sets up *Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay,* above them, which we shall stand by, and by; who are peaceable, and have never forfeited our Liberty; and do owe nothing but Peace and good Will towards the King, and all Men, and desire all Men Good and Prosperity in the Everlasting Life.

From Us, whose Names are here Subscribed, on the Behalf of all the Suffering People of God aforesaid.

<i>Amar Stodard,</i>	<i>Thomas Lee,</i>	} And some others.
<i>Gabriel Laye,</i>	<i>Thomas Coker,</i>	
<i>Ellis Hookes,</i>	<i>John Nelson,</i>	
<i>Walter Mires,</i>	<i>William Crouch,</i>	
<i>George Whitbread,</i>	<i>Josiah Cole,</i>	